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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4433
INFO RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 1463
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 6284
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 4284

UNCLAS BRASILIA 000265

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USFS FOR MZWEDE AND EMAHEW;
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SUBJECT: AN AMENDED FOREST CONCESSIONS BILL PASSES THROUGH BRAZIL'S
SENATE

REF: 05 BRASILIA 2426

¶1. Summary: Brazil's Forest Concessions Bill (reftel) was approved by the Senate on Wednesday, February 2. However, three amendments were added to the bill. Accordingly, the bill must now return to the Chamber of Deputies (Brazilian House of Representatives) for a second vetting. If passed, the legislation would establish guidelines for managing public forests, create a National Forest Service and set up a National Forest Development Fund (PNDF). End Summary

¶2. In the wake of political infighting, the government closed an accord with opposition leaders to break a deadlock and bring a modified bill to the floor vote on Wednesday. Of the three newly incorporated amendments, the first insures that Congress has final authority to approve concessions over 6250 acres, the second that the Senate confirms the appointed directors of the newly created forest service and the third stipulates that the executive council overseeing forest service and PNDP be comprised of seven ministries, among which are the Ministries of Science and Technology, Agriculture and Defense, as opposed to just the Ministry of Environment.

¶3. For the ruling party, and those in favor of the bill, the amendments represent another obstacle to forest management. But, proponents of the bill agreed to support the amendments on a promise from that the opposition would push for an immediate vote on the bill when it reaches the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber has 10 days from Wednesday to appraise and vote anew on the bill.

¶4. Comment: The outcome of yesterday's vote is complex. Although positive on the surface, environmentalists worry that the new amendments unnecessarily politicize forest management. Compounding these concerns, if the Chamber further modifies the bill, sending it back to the Senate, there is worry that insufficient time exists to pass the bill prior to the election year slowdown. Fernando Lyrio of the Ministry of the Environment told Scicon that while the Ministry is concerned by the amendments it is pleased with the bill's passage. Post will provide additional updates as events develop. End Comment

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